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SUBJECT: WB/G SITREP: MAY 6, 2005 (1700 HOURS LOCAL) --
FATAH WINS MAJORITY OF MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SEATS, BUT HAMAS
HAS STRONG SHOWING; QASSAM ROCKETS LAND IN SDEROT

This is a joint ConGen Jerusalem/Embassy Tel Aviv cable.

1. (SBU) Summary. Fatah won at least 60 percent of 906 municipal council seats in May 5 elections held in 84 localities in the West Bank and Gaza, based on preliminary results and exit polling, but Hamas also garnered 35-37 percent. Militants fired four Qassam rockets toward Sderot May 5-6, according to Israeli news sources. End summary.

West Bank

2. (SBU) ATTACKS/SECURITY:

-- Deaths: A PIJ militant shot and injured May 2 by the IDF in Saida village (near Tulkarm) died of his injuries at Ramle prison on May 5, according to Israeli and Palestinian newspapers.

-- Injuries: Nil.

-- Arrests: Nil.

-- Incursions: Nil.

3. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- PA President Abbas will leave Ramallah May 7 for an international tour including Chile, Brazil, China, Japan and India, according to PA presidential office sources.

-- Fatah won a majority of municipal council seats in May 5 elections, with preliminary results showing Fatah with over 60 percent of the vote. Hamas posted a strong showing, however, gaining between 35-37 percent, in races that are viewed as indicative of current Hamas-Fatah support in the run-up to crucial PLC elections July 17. While there were scattered reports of irregularities, most observers found the overall process to be fairly conducted.

Gaza

4. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Injuries: Nil.

-- Mortars/Rockets: Palestinians fired two rockets at Sderot on May 5 and two additional rockets May 6, but no injuries occurred.

-- Rocket: According to Israeli media, Palestinians fired an anti-tank rocket May 6 at a school bus carrying children outside Kfar Darom, but no injuries occurred.

-- Shootings: According to the IDF, Palestinians shot at an IDF bulldozer on May 5 north of an IDF post near Rafah. In another incident, Palestinians shot at an IDF post near Rafiah Yam. On May 6, Palestinian also shot at an IDF tank post west of Rafah, but no injuries resulted.

-- Explosions: According to UNRWA, the IDF discovered and safely detonated May 5 a road-side bomb just north of Sufa crossing.

5. (SBU) INCURSIONS/DEMOLITIONS: Nil.

6. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS:

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open May 6, with a major detour at Netzarim

Junction. Abu Khouli checkpoint was open.

-- Erez Crossing was closed May 5 between 0900 and 1100 due to a suspicious object found in the mail. No explosions or injuries resulted. During other hours May 5, the crossing was closed to Palestinian laborers and open to internationals.

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was closed May 5.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers May 6, but was open for the import of aggregates used in construction.

-- Karni Terminal was open, but operating slowly May 6.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for arrivals and departures May 6.

-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint was closed May 6. Toufah checkpoint was open for residents of al-Mowassi, except males aged 16-30.

17. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- Media and NGO sources reported that elections held in 5 municipalities in Gaza May 5 went smoothly for the most part. According to preliminary results, Hamas won a majority of council seats in al-Burayj. In Rafah, preliminary results showed Fatah winning a slight majority of council seats over Hamas.

-- According to Israeli media reports, Defense Minister Mofaz reportedly has instructed the IDF to change its non-engagement policy to begin responding to Kassam rocket and mortar shell attacks on Israeli communities. High-ranking military officials reportedly explained the decision by saying there had been a 300-percent increase in terrorist activity, reverting back to the same terrorist levels as preceded the cease-fire.
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